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Leftys

Rhonda Crabshaw ranked as the last to confide in, and in the blue fluorescence shot off by the Pepsi machine, she looked even more threatening. That brow! thought Larkie, it's like a balcony. But he had to seize the moment, even to admitting his shyness "...so I just wanted to ask your advice, see, because, well the women are forever teasing me, and with all the overtime lately, the only ones I meet are on the force, but I'm reluctant to ask any of them out in case they really do think I'm some kind of nerd."

Officer Crabshaw picked up a clipboard and seemed to be reading the solution to Larkie's dilemma off it, her forehead even more massive under the boyish haircut. "If they think you're a nerd, then it's their problem. Anyway, just don't

bother with them--not enough time. You're twenty six or so, right, Larkie? Wasted too much of your life being nice. Somehow got to start accelerating. Ac-cel-er-a-TING!" she drummed the clipboard with a pencil, and then abruptly ceased, shrugging "I'll...give you the course. But no tell!"--drawing a rough finger over his lips, she laughed alarmingly. "On second thought, go ahead and tell if you want! I don't know what reputation I've got left and I simply don't care. What am I here for? To be a police officer, right? One of Miami's Finest! My personal life is personal."

"Well I wouldn't ever," Larkie started reassuring her but leaked steam rapidly. "Uh, if...you decided to...uh, ultimately..." Then he became convinced that Rhonda was aping the familiar, distressing pattern: "Uh huh! You're...kidding me too, Rhonda, am I right?"

"Nope. Never! Uh uh. No-oh-way. Nein. Nada. And negative in whatever language I'll have to take to qualify for my Master's in Criminal Justice--if I got that last word right. I don't kid; you'll find that out." Her gray eyes held twin, somber Larkies.

"But I thought you were...locked up with some dentist."

"And safe therefore? Shut up for now, Larkie!" She began smashing at the Pepsi machine with an open palm. "I thought

before this that you were even too shy to talk, and now you're suddenly Officer Gabby. Anyway, that dentist knows gum disease but not how a woman feels." She rocked the machine, repeating the sentiment. "Tell me to stop, Larkie!" she finally breathed, hoarsely. "It's only a stupid device...and not a dentist. For one, it's better looking. And I've only lost half a dollar and not a significant portion of my only life." She bounced back from the rocking machine with a smile of vengeful glee. "Oooooops! Well I guess I'm on the rebound, hey? Do you know what that means?"

"Uh. No."

"It means, my bashful one, that I'll be twice as good to you and twice as *intense*." In the icy emanations from all the snack machines her eyes took on the color of mercury. "Well! Judging by your look you got more than you bargained for. Wanted sisterly advice and ended up with a real woman instead! Your lucky day!"

...

Me and the poor dentist, sssss-scarred bodies by the wayside! *I gave her my heart but she wanted my soul*, he mouths the words of a country-western song. Actually my body!--I think that's what this is called, what's left of it. Larkie, in departmental trousers with powder blue Cuban shirt, sits on a

bench at Dinner Key, half-watching the sailboats tie up.

A phone rings in the marina office, recalling the one message on the machine laying among scattered, boxes in his Coconut Grove apartment: "Come on back. There are things I can change. I've thought extensively about all of this."

An old boat groans into its berth. "*Everything aches,*" Larkie whispers, "*body and soul hangover.*" Out on Biscayne Bay, a sail dazzles against humpbacked clouds, which are dark and yet brilliantly outlined. The sail, too, goes black though its edge remains sunlit. Larkie senses fire scouring his very bones.

Knees stuck straight out, a blond young man careens past on a too-small bicycle. Suddenly he slips off backwards, lifting it above his head, wheels spinning. It's a folding model, and a quizzical attempt ensues to break it down to carrying size-- which act Larkie must tune out, a pitch for attention from this apparent incompetent in droopy white shorts. After a few minutes, the sound of the bike being thrown into a shrub nearly coincides with the young man thrusting himself backwards onto the bench, enormously sighing. "Keep it simple, right?"

"If you can," Larkie shrugs.

"I can. Believe me."

"Then you're lucky I suppose."

"Hope so. Say! You're in blue and I'm completely blue,

and so why not be that way together?"

"I wouldn't even know where to start with that kind of deranged thinking!" sneers Larkie. "In the first place, I do believe I come from another sexual direction."

"Don't even try to start. With my deranged thinking, I mean. Don't you even try! In the meantime, while you're not trying, I'll just sit here like a little lamb-y-kin--very short and very funny." The blond young man turns his knees and elbows inward, so as to diminish his size. "And if I feel any more lost, why then I'll ask you for sexual directions."

"You will huh? Did you get your highschool's award for *chutzpah*?"

"Just...*shyly*...wait. Uh, at your discretion."

"It's a free bench--unfortunately." Larkie shuts his eyes against the intruder.

"I'm WAIT-ing!" the young man eventually sings.

"Still here?" asks Larkie. "Then *I'm* to do something, huh? Is that it? Well, not bloody likely! I just came off an episode where I did things. Boy did I! May be better off not to even *think* for awhile."

"I know what you mean, and I have no trouble at all in *that* pursuit--or lack of pursuit. So...here we sit, and when you sit, you can't chase anyone, can you? Or any idea either. I'm

not moving. How about you?--outside of your shaking on account of those *nasty* ole memories I mean." He wiggles closer to Larkie, smiling broadly, as if primed to explode into teasing laughter.

"Don't you mean it's *my* move? I get that strong implication. Perhaps it was the sly wink--the cheapest trick in this silly seduction game you're absolutely wasting on me. And don't crowd!"--Larkie inches away.

"It is and it isn't your move. And, golly gee, if I winked I didn't even know it--maybe it's just squinting from that damn sun coming out! I like cloudy days--more mysterious. Easier on the wrinkles too. And, say, you yourself are not above a little teasing either, are you? In your capital-B, butch heterosexuality?"

"*It is and it isn't*," Larkie repeats his benchmate's words. "Like everything else, I'd say. And butch, huh? I sometimes wonder if I was Butch or Bambi in my last...demolition derby, but why on earth am I telling...?"

"Because I'm open and warm. Mhhhh!" the young man briefly embraces himself with enough force to rock the bench.

"Hadn't noticed. *Aggressive* is more to the point, I think."

"Excuse me for saying so, but you think too much."

"I do excuse you because you're right."

"Oh I wouldn't want to make that a habit! Although a little wouldn't hurt in my case. My wrongness index is way way up there. Typical fate of the dumb blond with, *ah hem*, innocent blue eyes."

"I'll buy the blue part," snaps Larkie.

"HMMMMM? I'm not sure that'll be enough. See me wondering? I'm WONDER-ing!"--again he breaks into song.

"Oh? Still in need of guidance?"

"You could say that. Or direction."

"Good! Then how about you go *that* way?" Larkie points brusquely towards the Chart House Restaurant. "And pick up some lonely businessman on Master Card. You get a lobster and give your all, and I get to stay here and continue sulking--without interference, or songs and dances with and without bicycles. Listen! If it were another time and place--and dimension--and we were two different people of the opposite sex...?"

"Nope. Can't just split like that. For one thing, I've probably been sent to be a whatchacallit, medium, to relieve all your tedious anxieties, and for another, we've known each other too long, wouldn't you say?"

"No! What else can I say?"

"Anything you please."

"Then let me say that I...gave her my heart and she...
ate the fuckin thing! Then started on my soul for dessert."

"Past tense!" He smilingly claps his hands as if to
dismiss Larkie's gloom. "Past tense!"

"Again, yes and no."

"Feeling ambivalent then?"

"Not in your sense I'm not. Sorry."

"Don't worry. I don't want anyone's soul. My own's enough
of a mess. Good gosh if I could see it I'd drop dead!" The
blond young man sinks his head to his chest and pretends to die,
twitchingly.

"Who wouldn't? And snap up! Don't want anyone to think
I'm sitting here with a cokehead or someone. It's bad enough.
But...why...am I *enjoying* myself with the likes of you?--at
least somewhat. And telling you things too? It's crazy. I
never tell anybody anything!--at least I won't ever again, not
after confiding in...someone, and barely living to tell the
tale.

God just listen to me whine!" Larkie slaps his forehead.

"So whine a little! Who are you not to? Which of these
yachts is yours by the bye?"

"No such luck as I know you know--always deflecting the
real, aren't you? Anyway, I guess I'm just going crazy. I can

only hope that I'm imagining *you*! Especially that...eye shadow or whatever it is. Just how weird are you, exactly?--not that it's any of my business."

"I am an all-natural product! You can take me anywhere. And I'm sincere!"

"You fake it well, saying what you think I want to hear: your strong suit I'd guess."

"If you cut me will I not bleed? And did you know a snake has two penises?"

"Oh? How does he throw out a line in Coconut Grove?" muses Larkie. "Excuse me Bridget, excuse me Bo."

"Oh there are all kinds of ways! And I know the places where you see them all, believe me!" The young man nods quickly, continues nodding in a slower and slower rhythm, his bright hair rising and falling, then he stonily stops.

"Don't you think you give things a tad too much drama?--if that's what that is. But, I'm...maybe one tenth of one percent intrigued about hearing of these alleged places where one sees everything--at least I think that's what this is."

"Don't worry. Just an emotion, I have them all the time--you can't always name them."

"I bet you do have them all the time, to the exclusion of everything else." Larkie shakes his head while his benchmate

shrugs.

"What else is there? Don't answer. You know, you amuse me more than friends I've had for years? Mr Man-All-In-Blue whose answers are conventional but whose heart's a bit wilder, I'm guessing." He dons his most burnished-looking smile as cloud shadows race over them.

"Well I'm glad to be good for something," Larkie chuckles, "such a wild heart in a square world is me! Give me a *break*, you...you sub-literary fraud!" The quick breeze rills their hair, swirling candy wrappers, rocking the sailboats in their berths.

"It's called Leftys, the place I'd like to show you?--no apostrophe. On North Beach. Gee it's a lovely wind now, isn't it? Just...lifting everything, hey?"

"Nothing. *Nada*." Larkie shakes his head.

"Well, that's a start."

"God but you're a persevering...faggot!"

"Oh please! I hate that word *persevering*. Oooops, watch it! Caught you *really* laughing. He's LAUGH-ing!" repeatedly sings the young man, ranging from bass to soprano. Hopping off the bench, he's soon down to one knee, quite blond in a shaft of sunlight.

O De sun shine East

De sun shine West

O my dat sun

He a terrible pest!

"Not as bad as you! And Al Jolson is long long dead,"
giggles Larkie.

We ALLLLLLL 'S gonna be!

And that there's gotta be

My only guarantee!

"You'd try to manipulate God himself!" Larkie bursts.

The young man rises to hitch up his shorts and studiously
brush his knee. "As long as we all understand each other."